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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/ELA, DRL/ILCSR - MORGAN, G/TIP - CDEBACA
STATE PASS USTR FRANCESCKI/GROVES
STATE PASS USAID BEVER/LAUDATO/SCOTT
DOL/ILAB FOR STROTKAMP/RIGBY/MCCARTER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON CHILD LABOR AND FORCED LABOR FOR DOL
CONGRESSIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS - LEBANON

REF: A. STATE 131995

[1](#)B. 09 BEIRUT 65

[1](#)C. 09 BEIRUT 435

1/TVPRA: FORCED LABOR AND EXPLOITATIVE
CHILD LABOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS

1A. (SBU) As noted in the 2009 TVPRA report, tobacco was the only good in Lebanon whose production was documented to include child labor. However, no tobacco from Lebanon was exported, according to the regional office of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

1B. (SBU) In addition, the ILO regional office noted that the presence of children on tobacco plantations was not exploitation. Tobacco farms -- mainly located in the south, and some in the eastern Bekaa region -- were family businesses in which all family members participated and faced similar hazardous conditions. Children were mainly involved in the harvesting of tobacco leaves, the hazards of which involved the use of needles, threads, and steelheads to string the tobacco to dry.

1C. (SBU) Post's information comes from meetings in late 2009 and early 2010 with ILO, Ministry of Education (MOE), and Ministry of Labor (MOL) representatives, as well as conversations with non-governmental organizations active in combating child labor.

1D. (SBU) According to a 2007 ILO report, the majority of the working children in tobacco cultivation were 12-15 years old, although some fell in the 9-12 years age range. As of January 2010, the ILO had not updated its 2007 figures.

1E. (SBU) According to a 2007 ILO report, the production of tobacco involved around 25,000 child laborers aged 7-17 years old. As of January 2010, the ILO had not updated its 2007 figures.

1F. (SBU) Post obtained conflicting reports on tobacco child laborers, school attendance, and GOL efforts to combat child labor in tobacco. The ILO noted that during the tobacco harvesting season, school hours were adjusted in coordination with the MOE to allow children to work in the fields to prevent dropouts. In addition, the vice president of a prominent NGO based in the south, the Association for the Development of Rural Capacities (ADR), told us that during the harvesting season schools were empty and the MOE unofficially condoned absences. However, a senior MOE official denied that public schools adjusted their teaching hours for any reason. Until the GOL finds an alternative livelihood for families dependent on tobacco production and musters the political will to address the issue (the GOL's Regie des Tabacs et Tombacs buys all tobacco production at subsidized prices), child labor in the tobacco sector will remain problematic, Embassy contacts opined.

(SBU) The ILO noted that in early 2009, a prominent multinational corporation provided tobacco farmers free machines that automatically align tobacco leaves and thread them, a process normally done by children. These machines had eliminated many of the hazards for children and decreased the number of children in the fields in 2009, ILO representatives said. After the success of this project, the company was looking into raising enough funds to provide these machines to all tobacco farmers.

(SBU) In addition, ADR in collaboration with the Spanish government ran a 3-year program (2006-2009) that provided remedial classes and extra-curricular activities on holidays to children from 12 different schools working in tobacco plantations in order to help them make up absences from the production season. ADR also actively encouraged families in southern Lebanon to switch from tobacco to more profitable alternative crops, such as medicinal plants, thyme, and olive trees.

TASKING 2/TDA

2A: PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EXPLOITATIVE CHILD LABOR

(SBU) In 2009, child labor in Lebanon was predominantly concentrated in informal sectors of the economy, including small family businesses, mechanical workshops, carpentry, construction, welding, agriculture, and fisheries. According to the ILO, an increasing number of children were involved in the drug trade, prostitution, domestic work (mainly in north Lebanon), and street vending

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(especially Syrians and Roma selling flowers in restaurants, primarily in Tripoli). ILO representatives noted that Lebanon was becoming a transit hub for the trafficking of women from Eastern Europe, some of them children, to work as prostitutes in Gulf countries, but the ILO lacked figures about the prevalence of this practice.

(SBU) Up-to-date figures on child labor in Lebanon in 2009 were unavailable. The ILO noted that its longstanding estimate of 100,000 child laborers -- commonly cited in literature and by the GOL -- was no longer accurate. Anecdotal evidence suggested the number of child workers had risen in 2009 and their distribution among sectors had changed, with fewer children working in tobacco production and more in the hidden services sector, such as prostitution. The ILO said worsening economic conditions had forced parents to remove their children from schools and put them to work to provide extra income for the family. As of January 2010, the ILO was working with a private research institute to update its child labor figures.

(SBU) The Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), in collaboration with the ILO, planned to conduct a labor force survey, but the approval of the prime minister had been pending since May 2009. CAS, in collaboration with UNICEF, recently finished the fieldwork for its Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS3), which will include a section on child labor, and planned to publish its results in the coming months.

2B: LAWS AND REGULATIONS

(SBU) As of January 2010, new legislation and amendments to current laws to bring Lebanon into conformity with UN Convention 182, including new provisions on child labor within the Labor Law and adopting the list of "worst forms of child labor," were still pending cabinet approval and ratification.

(SBU) Although a draft law raising compulsory education from 12 to 15, in compliance with UN Convention 138, was still pending in parliament at year's end, the ILO and MOE expected parliament would soon approve it. Although raising mandatory schooling ages would help reduce dropouts, the ILO questioned whether the GOL had

sufficient administrative capacity to enforce the proposed law, and it was unclear if the schools had the capacity to absorb the additional students. In principle, public education was free, but families were required to pay registration and other miscellaneous school expenses.

(SBU) In 2009, the Higher Council for Childhood (HCC), part of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), was working with UNICEF Lebanon, Save the Children Sweden, and World Vision Lebanon on a Child Protection Law to further develop Law 422 on the protection of children. Meanwhile, in 2009 the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) submitted a draft law on trafficking to the Ministry of Justice that was still pending approval in the cabinet at year's end.

2C: INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS FOR ENFORCEMENT

(SBU) According to the MOL, most accounts of child labor in 2009 related to hazardous child labor, not forced child labor. Representatives of the MOL Child Labor Unit explained that the GOL does not differentiate between hazardous and forced child labor since the two conditions were difficult to distinguish on the ground. Therefore, we will respond to questions 1-14 jointly, unless noted otherwise.

¶1. (SBU) The MOL, via its Child Labor Unit, and the Ministry of Interior (MOI), via the Internal Security Forces (ISF), were responsible for the enforcement of laws related to hazardous child labor and forced labor.

¶2. (SBU) In 2009, there were minimal mechanisms for exchanging information between the MOL and MOI. The MOL expected coordination to improve following the adoption, expected in February 2010, of a joint monitoring system at the MOL to coordinate nationwide efforts on child labor. (Note: See part 2E for details on the monitoring system. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) There was no formal mechanism for submitting complaints about child labor violations, but the MOL received informal complaints in 2009. MOL inspectors could enter formal sector workplaces based on a complaint, but they also conducted routine

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workplace inspections. According to the MOL, inspectors could only investigate alleged cases of child labor in the informal sector following a complaint. In such cases, MOL inspectors would summon the suspected informal sector employer to the ministry to discuss the complaint. For complaints regarding tobacco farms, which fall in the informal sector, MOL inspectors could inspect the farm itself if the employer ignored the MOL request to meet. For complaints regarding child labor/forced labor in homes, however, MOL inspectors lacked a mandate to enter homes to continue investigations. The MOSA's social workers could enter informal places of work where child labor was suspected, but they were only empowered to assess the overall welfare of the family entity, not the working conditions of individuals, including children.

¶4. (SBU) MOL inspectors received their regular salaries, in addition to transportation allowances, compensatory time, and compensation for each inspection made. According to the ILO, salaries were low and inspectors lacked the facilities and financial and technical support to properly perform their duties.

¶5. (SBU) In 2009, the MOL employed approximately 130 labor inspectors and assistant inspectors. The MOL admitted that the number of inspectors was inadequate.

¶6. (SBU) The GOL does not maintain statistics on the number of inspections carried out by the MOL.

¶7. (SBU) The GOL does not maintain statistics of the number of children who were removed or assisted as a result of inspections.

¶8. (SBU) The ISF must report all cases in which protection was requested for juveniles -- whether as accused, victims or witnesses

-- to the Directorate of Juveniles at the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), according to a memorandum between the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and MOJ. The head of the MOJ directorate, who lacked any information about child labor court cases, noted that most ISF officers were unaware of the requirements or lacked clarity regarding what information they were required to report. In addition, the MOJ noted that any data on legal cases would be inaccurate since some cases involving child labor inspections were solved administratively or via warnings instead of entering the court system.

¶9. (SBU) Neither the MOL nor MOJ maintained figures or estimates about the number of child labor cases that were closed in 2009.

¶10. (SBU) Neither the MOL nor MOJ maintained figures or estimates about the number of child labor violations or convictions achieved in 2009.

¶11. (SBU) Since neither the MOL nor MOJ maintained figures or estimates about the number of child labor cases that were closed or opened in 2009, no information on the average length of each case was available.

¶12. (SBU) Since neither the MOL nor MOJ maintained figures or estimates about the number of child labor cases that were closed or opened in 2009, no information about penalties applied in 2009 was available.

¶13. (SBU) The GOL lacked resources to effectively combat child labor in 2009, but official interlocutors expressed a commitment to combat child labor within the resources available and to improve the legislative framework to more effectively address child labor violations. In particular, GOL interlocutors expected more progress following the establishment of a monitoring system for child labor based at the MOL. (Note: Please refer to part 2E for details on the monitoring system. End note.) The ILO also noted the MOL's commitment to combat child labor in 2010.

¶14. (SBU) The ILO provided ongoing training on best practices for MOL labor inspectors in 2009.

2D: INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

(SBU) The GOL lacked detailed information on child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), or the use of children in illicit activities. As of January 2010, World Vision was finalizing an assessment of child trafficking in Lebanon. The HCC noted that Lebanon -- still in the primary stages of addressing child trafficking -- was focused on awareness more than enforcement and therefore had no record of convictions. Because of these

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factors, we received only merged data -- when data existed -- on the three categories. Therefore, we will answer questions 1-13 jointly for all three categories, unless noted otherwise.

¶1. (SBU) The HCC, ISF, MOJ, and MOL were jointly charged with enforcement of child trafficking, CSEC, and the use of children in illicit activities. There were no figures in 2009 on the number of people responsible for and dedicated to related investigations. The HCC had a full-time staff of seven coordinators and 22 outsourced social workers. MOL employed approximately 130 labor inspectors and assistant inspectors. None of the ISF's 23,000 officers focus specifically on child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, according to the HCC.

¶2. (SBU) Because no trafficking law existed 2009, information was unavailable regarding funding for trafficking investigation activities.

¶3. (SBU) No mechanism existed in 2009 to report violations. The HCC, in collaboration with Save the Children and UNICEF, was working on establishing a hotline, but the secretary general of the HCC said the project -- still in its primary stages -- lacked a projected a

time frame for completion.

¶4. (SBU) Because no laws in 2009 specifically included child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, no data on arrests or prosecutions on these charges existed. If those accused of these offenses were prosecuted, charges were listed under prostitution, rape, withholding a passport, or similar crimes. The MOJ's Directorate of Juveniles published online the partial data that it had collected. The figures for preliminary investigations during 2008 showed 14 accused and 44 victims in the category "rape and sexual abuse," while nine others were accused of "prostitution." These were the only figures available for investigations and post had no means to independently verify the data.

¶5. (SBU) Neither the GOL nor NGOs maintained information on the number of children rescued.

¶6. (SBU) Because no laws specifically included child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, information on the number of arrests or prosecutions for these charges in 2009 was unavailable.

¶7. (SBU) Because no laws specifically include child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, information on the number of cases resolved in 2009 was unavailable.

¶8. (SBU) Because no laws specifically include child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, no figures were available on the number of convictions in 2009.

¶9. (SBU) Lebanon's legal framework on child trafficking, CSEC, and the use of children in illicit activities differed according to the issue. CSEC and the use of children in illicit activities probably fell under the Law on Juveniles (Law 422), according to the HCC, but the 2002 law was vague and thus difficult to enforce. In 2009, no legislation existed for child trafficking. The HCC, as part of the MOSA, was working on a draft child protection law that would explicitly cover child trafficking, CSEC, and the use of children in illicit activities. In addition, UNODC drafted a trafficking law for the MOJ that included a section on child trafficking; UNODC expected the MOJ to submit the draft law to the cabinet for approval in early February. (Note: If approved by cabinet, the law would go to parliament for approval. End note.)

¶10. (SBU) Because no laws specifically included child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, information regarding sentences served in 2009 was unavailable.

¶11. (SBU) Because no laws specifically included child trafficking, CSEC, or the use of children in illicit activities, information regarding the length of time required to resolve cases in 2009 was unavailable.

¶12. (SBU) The HCC, in collaboration with World Vision, will begin a pilot training program during the first quarter of 2010 on how to identify, enforce, and record child trafficking cases. This initial project is not expected to include more than 20 ISF members.

¶13. (SBU) No armed conflict took place in Lebanon in 2009.

2E: GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

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¶1. (SBU) In the new cabinet's ministerial statement of December 2009, the GOL vowed to enact policies to "move from social care to social development" and "to focus on protecting vulnerable groups," including children. The ministerial statement also prioritized "solving the issue of abandoned children and beggars in the streets," along with implementing the Convention on Children's Rights.

¶2. (SBU) The GOL promised to formulate a plan to combat violence against women, as well as legislation to combat trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation and forced labor. No action on

these issues was taken in 2009.

(SBU) The MOL is expected to start implementing Phase III of the ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) in February 2010. This three-year program will focus primarily on child labor in the north and reopen the referral centers -- used to file complaints of child or forced labor -- that were closed due to violence in the area and a lack of funding. More importantly, Phase III will focus on establishing a child labor monitoring unit at the MOL. This unit, which will include representatives from the MOI, the MOE, the MOSA, the MOJ, and the Ministry of Public Health, is designed to coordinate child labor policies and enforcement efforts.

13. (SBU) Phase III of the IPEC program is expected to start soon in northern Lebanon with funding of approximately \$1 million from the Government of Italy. The MOL will not provide direct funding to the project, but it will pay the salaries of MOL employees in the Child Labor Unit who will help implement the project. Foreign funding and MOL contributions to support IPEC and broader efforts to combat child labor were not sufficient, according to the MOL, and there is no separate allocation for child labor in the MOL budget.

14. (SBU) The MOL collaborated with the ILO to plan and implement the first two stages of the IPEC program and in the planning of the third stage.

15. (SBU) According to the MOL, formulation of the third stage of the IPEC program was successful, and implementation will begin in 2010.

16. (SBU) The government did not participate in any commissions or task forces on child labor.

17. (SBU) The GOL did not sign a bilateral, regional or international agreement to combat trafficking in 2009.

2F: SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ELIMINATE OR PREVENT CHILD LABOR

11. (SBU) During 2009, the HCC held a number of awareness campaigns and training sessions targeting child labor and forced labor throughout Lebanon. In collaboration with World Vision, the HCC held six workshops (from June to October 2009) with stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including NGOs, associations, and municipalities to raise awareness of child trafficking.

(SBU) The Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) established a child labor unit in 2005 with the help of the ILO. In 2009 it held only one workshop specifically on child labor, but it continued a general awareness campaign and distributed booklets on child labor during all association events. Child labor, which was mainly concentrated in informal sectors of the economy, was minimal within the 800 ALI member companies, all of which must be registered at the Ministry of Industry.

12. (SBU) The ministerial statement of the new cabinet prioritizes social welfare and economic development, but does not specifically mention child labor. ILO and MOL contacts assess, however, that the minister of labor will tackle child labor issues.

13. (SBU) The HCC awareness workshops were funded by World Vision. The government did not independently fund any such programs.

14. (SBU) The GOL did not provide any non-monetary support to child labor programs, aside from encouraging MOL employees from the Child Labor Unit to attend workshops and conferences that improved their understanding of child labor issues.

15. (SBU) According to the HCC, the MOSA contracted 14 non-governmental organizations throughout Lebanon to provide health, education, and rehabilitation services to children at risk. MOSA contributed about \$5 million to these organizations in 2009. The

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MOL did not have any programs that provided social services to children at risk of or involved in exploitive child labor.

16. (SBU) In 2009, the GOL did not sign any bilateral or international agreements to combat trafficking.

2G: CONTINUAL PROGRESS

(SBU) Although several key pieces of legislation to address child and forced labor issues have been pending in parliament or in the drafting stages for years, political instability has distracted the GOL from prioritizing the issue. The new national unity government has pledged its desire to focus on social issues going forward, and hopes are high among anti-trafficking and child labor NGOs. The new minister of labor has committed to tackling child labor and prioritized modernizing the Labor Law. As a result, 2010 should be a key year in determining the GOL's commitment to addressing issues of child and forced labor.

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